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Message Text

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42
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 IO-11 AID-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 OES-03 INT-05 /089 W
---------- 000557
R 180920Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4087

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 2453

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECRE, PFOR, IN, BG
SUBJ: FARAKKA BARRAGE

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM CALCUTTA 413 DTD 17 FEB 76 REPEATED YOU:

QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CALCUTTA 0413

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECRE, PFOR, IN, BG
SUBJ: FARAKKA BARRAGE

REF: DACCA 606, DACCA 691, DACCA 744, DACCA 782

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN CALCUTTA, INDIANS ARE TAKING PLANNED 40,000 CUSECS FROM GANGES AT FARAKKA FOR BHAGIRATHI-HOOGHLY. THEY SEEM PLEASEDWITH RESULTS THUS FAR. WE HAVE NOTICED FEW PUBLIC COMMENTS BY INDIAN PRESS OR OFFICIALS SHOWING AWARENESS THAT OPERATIONS OF FARAKKA MAY BE CAUSING PROBLEMS FOR BANGLADESH. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO J. MANDAL, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE FARAKKA BARRAGE, ABOUT 40,000 CUSECS ARE BEING TAKEN OUT OF GANGES AT
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FARAKKA FOR DIVERSION TO THE BHAGIRATHI-HOOGHLY. HE CONCEDED ON

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QUESTIONING, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO MEASURE VERY PRECISELY SUCH A LARGE AMOUNT OF WATER. (DIVERSION CANAL

ALMOST 500 FEET WIDE: J. MANDAL SAID THAT THE DIVERSION OF WATER TO THE HOOGHLY HAD ALREADY STARTED TO PUSH SAND BARS DOWN THE RIVER, AND SHOULD EVENTUALLY CLEAR AT LEAST SOME OF THEM OUT ALTOGETHER. HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE DRAFT OF THE RIVER AT CALCUTTA HAD INCREASED BY ABOUT TWO FEET. MANDAL NOTED THAT THE SALINITY OF HOOGHLY WATER USED BY CALCUTTA FOR ITS DRINKING SUPPLY HAD DECREASED MARKEDLY SINCE FARAKKA HAD BEEN FUNCTIONING. CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CMDA) OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR WATER SUPPLY ARE SIMILARLY PLEASED. AS A RESULT OF THE SUCCESS OF FARAKKA, THEY THINK CONSTRUCTION CAN PROCEED ON A SECOND WATER WORKS ON THE HOOGHLY SOUTH OF CALCUTTA AT GARDEN REACH.

3. OFFICIALS OF THE CALCUTTA PORT TRUST (FORMERLY THE PORT COMMISSION) ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE IMPACT OF FARAKKA, BUT THINK IT WILL BE SOME YEARS YET BEFORE IT WILL BE FULLY FELT. ACCORDING TO A STORY IN THE STATESMAN OF JANUARY 10, THE CHAIR-MAN OF THE PORT TRUST, P.C. MITRA, SAID DISCHARGE OF 40,000 CUSECS HAD HELPED TO STABILIZE THE COURSE OF THE HOOGHLY DURING THE DRY SEASON FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SIXTY YEARS. MITRA WAS ALSO QUOTED AS SAYING THAT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CONDITION OF THE RIVER WOULD PERMIT CUTTING DOWN ON DREDGING EXPENSES. ON THE OTHER HAND MITRA TOLD CONGEN OFFICER (AS REPORTED IN CALCUTTA -02, FEB 10) THAT FIRST RESULT OF FLUSHING UPPER REACHES OF RIVER MAY BE TO INCREASE SILTATION NEAR CALCUTTA. OTHER PORT TRUST OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT IT WOULD TAKE TWO YEARS FOR THE RIVER TO STABILIZE ITSELF, AND SIX OR SEVEN FOR STABLE 30-FOOT CHANNEL TO BE CREATED. ONLY THEN WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO EVALUATE FARAKKA PROJECT.

4. THERE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SEVERAL ARTICLES IN CALCUTTA PRESS ON FARAKKA, BUT VERY LITTLE COMMENT ON ITS IMPACT ON BANGLADESH. FEB 11 EDITION OF ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA CARRIED FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE ILLUSTRATED WITH MAP ON FLOODING PROBLEMS THAT HAVE RESULTED FROM DIVERSION OF WATER BY FARAKKA. BEFORE CONSTRUCTION OF BARRAGE, WATER FROM BHAGIRATHI USED TO BACK UP TWO TRIBUTARIES AND FLOOD SURROUNDING LAND ONLY DURING MONSOON
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SEASON. NOW THAT WATER IS BEING RELEASED IN THE BHAGIRATHI EVEN DURING THE DRY SEASON, THE PROBLEM HAS BECOME PERMANENT. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, IT COULD BE SOLVED BY INSTALLATION OF SLUICE GATES BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION WHEN SUCH A MEASURE MIGHT BE TAKEN. ANANDA BAZAR REPORT DOES NOT MENTION AMOUNT OF WATER BEING TAKEN OUT OF GANGES. STATESMAN EDITORIAL OF FEB 17 COMMENTS ON LOK SABHA PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORT WARNING OF DOOM OF CALCUTTA PORT UNLESS MINIMUM FLOW OF 40,000 CUSECS

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IN BHAGIRATHI-HOOGHLY IS ASSURED. EDITORIAL SAYS EVEN THE NEW PORT OF HALDIA, DOWNSTREAM FROM CALCUTTA, IS DEPENDENT ON FARAKKA. "IN SHORT," SAYS THE EDITORIAL, "THE PROSPERITY OF THE ENTIRE EASTERN REGION DEPENDS ON THE SUCCESSFUL FUNCTIONING OF THE RS. 180 CRORE PROJECT." STATESMAN DENIES THAT BANGLADESH HAS ANY CAUSE FOR CONCERN: "THE (INTERNATIONAL) CONTROVERSY WAS UNNECESSARY, SINCE THE GANGA HAS A MINIMUM DRY SEASON FLOW OF 65,000 CUSECS WHICH GOES UP TO 2.7 MILLION CUSECS DURING THE MONSOONS; ANOTHER 25,000 CUSECS ARE EXPECTED TO BECOME AVAILABLE, PARTLY THROUGH THE FARAKKA BARRAGE AND PARTLY FROM THE REGENERATED DISCHARGE OF THE GANGA BELOW FARAKKA, THUS GUARANTEEING A MINIMUM 25,000 CUSECS FOR THE PADMA-MAGHNA SYSTEM. THIS SHOULD SURELY BE ADEQUATE FOR BANGLADESH'S FISHING, IRRIGATION, AND NAVIGATION, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT CONSIDERABLY EXCEEDS DACCA'S ORIGINAL DEMAND FOR ONLY 3,500 CUSECS."

6. BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY WANTS TO PUBLICIZE DISPUTE. BANGLADESH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSION IN CALCUTTA ISSUED PRESS RELEASE ON FEB 13 ON ABBAS "INTERVIEW" REPORTED IN DACCA 782. IT HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED BY ANY CALCUTTA PAPER.

NO DOUBT INDICATING THAT AUTHORITIES HERE DO NOT WANT BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN OVER FARAKKA OFFTAKE DISCUSSED IN THE PAPERS AT THIS TIME.
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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